THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (d) Different findings have been reported relating to melting of Himalayan glaciers. According to Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released in April 2007, the Himalayan Glaciers are receding faster than in any part of the world. Whereas the studies carried out by Geological Survey of India indicates that the majority of Himalayan glaciers are passing through a phase of recession, which is a worldwide phenomenon. The recession of glaciers is a part of the natural cyclic process of changes in size and other attributes of the glaciers. These changes could be attributed to various reasons including global warming.

A National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) was launched in June 2008 which envisages the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Eco-system amongst its 8 National Missions. This Mission would seek to understand weather and the extent to which the Himalayan glaciers are in recession and how the problen could be addressed. A new research centre on Himalayan Glaciology has been established at Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehradun. Government has also prepared guidelines and best practices for sustaining Himalayan eco-system and has shared it with all State Governments in the Himalayan region.

Long-term comprehensive studies are required in order to conclusively establish the impact of global warming on recession of glaciers in Himalayan region.

Damage to environment due to plastic pouches

†2667. SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the increasing production of small plastic pouches is damaging the environment;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government is contemplating banning these pouches; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (d) The problem posed by the use of plastic pouches is primarily due to deficiencies in the waste management system. The Central Government has notified the "Recycled Plastics Manufacture and Usage Rules, 1999 (as amended in 2003)" to regulate the manufacture, sale and use and recycling of plastic bags. These Rules, inter alia, prohibit manufacture, sale and use of plastic carry bags less than 20 micron in thickness and less than 8 x12 inches in size. Some States have prescribed more stringent norms for thickness of plastic bags or have banned the use of plastic bags in tourist/public places.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.